

PRAYERFUL IMPORTUNITY

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A SERMON

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*“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him,
though he bear long with them?”*

Luke 18:7

YOU remember this is the conclusion of the parable of the importunate widow. Her husband was dead, he had left her perhaps a little property, and some adversary, very probably a lawyer, seized hold of it, and took from her all that she had. What was she to do? She went straightway to the judge, the appointed minister of justice in the city. The first time she went, she met with a cold repulse. She went a second time, her poverty drove her, her necessity compelled her to face the man again.

Now the judge “neither feared God, nor regarded man,” but at last seeing the vehemence of the woman, feeling that he should be exceedingly troubled by her constant importunity, he granted her request, and he did avenge her of her adversary. Jesus used this to show the power of importunity—“Hear what the unjust judge saith”—“And if the *unjust* judge did this, shall not God avenge his own elect, who cry day and night unto him?”

Now, in trying to discuss this text this evening, I shall first show what I believe to be *the primary application of it*, and secondly, I shall try to enlarge upon *the general principle involved in it*—that importunity is very prevalent with God.

I. To begin then—WHAT WAS THE ABSOLUTE AND CLEAREST MEANING THAT OUR SAVIOR WOULD CONVEY TO HIS DISCIPLES BY THE PARABLE?

Well, now, I think the whole sense of the parable, as far as we can make any special application of it, hinges upon the meaning of that word “avenge.” What is it that Christ’s church is always praying for? The answer is they are praying spiritually for that which the poor widow prayed for actually—they are praying to be avenged of their adversary.

Now what did this mean in the poor woman’s case? For in some degree, it means just the same in the church’s case. I do not believe that that poor widow woman, when she went to the judge, went for mere vengeance’s sake. I cannot conceive that our Savior would have exhibited the perseverance of malice as an example to His people. I do not think that when she applied day after day to the court of the judge to be avenged, she applied to have her adversary punished. for the mere sake of his being punished.

It strikes me there was no revenge whatever in the poor woman’s spirit, and that what she went for was simply this, her husband was dead, he had left her a little property, it was all she had to bring his babes up and support herself, someone had seized this property, and what she wanted was, that the property might be restored to her, that that which had been unlawfully taken from the weak by the mighty, might at once be taken from the clutches of the strong, and restored unto the rightful owner. I think any intelligent person reading the passage would at once conceive that that was what she was seeking.

Now the church of Christ is seeking the very same thing. Those that can cry day and night in heaven before the throne of God, do not cry out of a spirit of revenge. The saints, when they pray to God on earth, and girdle the globe with supplication, do not pray against the wicked out of a spirit of hatred. God forbid that any of us should ever fall on our knees and ask God to avenge us of our adversary in the common acceptance of that phrase!

I am sure there is no Christian actuated by the Spirit of Christ, who would ever ask for vengeance, even on the head of the bloodiest persecutor, for if he should do so, I think the lips of Jesus might rebuke him, for we know what Jesus said when He was dying, He did not wish to be avenged, for He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Christ's church is seeking after just what the poor widow woman was seeking after, and we are to understand our text, "Shall not God avenge his own elect?" in that modified sense which the parable would convey to us. The fact is, Christ's church is a widow, it is true her husband is alive, but she is in a widowed state because he has departed from her. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Bridegroom, was once with His people, and the church could not mourn or fast when the Bridegroom was with her. But He said, "The day shall come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away, and then she shall fast."

These are the days, "Our Jesus has gone up on high," He is not with us in person now, He has left His church in the wilderness, it is true He has left the Comforter with her, but His own absolute, personal presence is not vouchsafed to her, He is not yet come a second time without a sin offering unto salvation.

Well, then, taking advantage of the absence of Christ, the church's Husband, the kings, the princes, the rulers, spiritual wickedness in high places, have sought to rob the church of her rights and her privileges, and what the church is always crying for is that God would restore her her rights, that He would give to her the portion which her Husband left her in His last legacy, and which, in due time, when God shall have answered her prayers, He shall restore unto her. And what is that legacy?

My brethren, there are many things that Christ has left to His church of which the world has robbed us. The church was once a united church. When Christ was in this world, His prayer was that they all might be one, even as He and His Father were one. Alas! the world has robbed us of our unity, and now, behold, the church cries day and night, "Restore, O Lord, the scattered of Israel, and bring us into one fold, and let us have one Shepherd!"

The spirit of the world has crept into our midst, and split us into many denominations. God's children are not now called Christians, but they are called Baptists and Independents, Churchmen, Dissenters, and such-like names of distinction. Their oneness, although it really exists in the heart, yet is lost, at least in the outward appearance of it, and to some degree, it is entirely lost. But the church is crying for it every day, the true hearts in the midst of God's Zion and the glorified spirits above are crying, day without night, "O Lord, make Your church one!"

Again, the church was sent into this world to bring the world to a knowledge of the truth, and one day, the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. We may say that all the world is Christ's, though heathenism has a part of it, Mohammed has another, and the Pope another. The world is divided into different sections, under different false systems of religion, but all the world belongs by right to Christ.

We can cast our eye around the world, from the river even to the ends of the earth, and we can say, "The kings of the isles shall bring tribute; the princes of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts; kings shall yet be the nursing fathers of the church, and queens the nursing mothers." But the world has robbed us of this, the different false religions have spoiled the church's inheritance, the wild boar of the wood does waste her, and does devour her borders. Zion's banner should wave everywhere in every kingdom, but instead thereof the priests, the kings, the idol gods have taken the kingdoms unto themselves.

Now this is the great thing, I believe, that the church is praying for. You know the church is one day to wear a crown. Christ's church is Christ's royal bride, and she is to have a crown, but she can never have it until her prayer has been heard, until her Lord comes to revenge her wrongs. For, lo! the church of God is trampled on and despised, the precious sons of Zion, comparable unto fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the workings of the potter! God's chosen people are counted as the off-scouring of all things, instead of being, as indeed they are, considered as the blood royal of the universe—the princes among men.

Now, because of these lost rights, Christ's church cries day and night unto God, crying out, "O Lord, avenge us of our adversary, and restore unto Your widowed church her rights!"

Put the Jew wherever you may, and he will always declare that the promised land belongs to his nation. There is a pride about the Jew, wherever he may be, he believes himself still to belong to that chosen family whose were the covenants and the oracles. That is true of the Christian, he may be never so poor, never so despised, but knowing himself to belong to the chosen body, he claims that all things are his own.

You may clothe him in fustian, and you may feed him on bread and water, but he will still say, "All things are mine." You may thrust him into a dungeon, and let no light come to him except through iron bars, but he will still declare, "Mine are the valleys and the hills; mine by sacred right, my Father made them all."

There is a royalty in a Christian which persecution cannot burn out, which shame cannot crush, which poverty cannot root up, there it is, and there it must be forever, and conscious of his high rights and distinctive privileges, the Christian, the believer, will never cease to cry unto Christ, that he may yet have his rights and possess what his God gave him.

Now, dear friends, very often we are low-spirited and down-hearted, sometimes the Christian minister goes back from his pulpit and says, "Ah! the Gospel seems making very little progress, I do not see how the kingdoms of this earth are to belong to Christ." The Sunday school teacher goes home from his class and says, "This is weary work, if things go on as they do now, we shall always have to say, 'Who hath believed our report?' and how can the church prosper if things be so?" And there are times with each of us when a kind of sickness seizes our spirits, we look at everything with a sad eye, and we say, "Ah! the millennium is many years off."

Indeed, unbelief says it is quite impossible. "How shall the heathen bow before Him? How shall they that dwell in the wilderness lick the dust?" Now, you who have thought thus, and you who are thinking so now, hear the Savior's argument for your consolation, the argument couched in the text—the church of God is crying unto Him day and night. There where the burning lamps of heaven perpetually light the skies, high in the seventh heaven, above the stars, where angels cast their crowns before the Most High, the saints forever cry to God, "O Lord, avenge Thine own elect!" for prayer is made in heaven. The saints under the altar cry aloud, "O Lord, how long?" There is never a moment when the saints cease to pray, they have—

*"Vials full of odor sweet,
And harps of sweeter sound."*

And we remember that the saints on earth are always in prayer. You meet together in the evening for prayer, you scatter to your houses, and then your family fires begin to burn, and when your family fires are put out, and your private devotions have ceased, the sun is just rising in the other land across the western sea, and there they are beginning to pray again, and when the sun has set, then it rises somewhere round the world in the far east, there by the Ganges river, there by the Himalaya steeps, the saints of God begin again, and when the sun winds on its course, and again shines somewhere else, then the saints of the Lord offer incense and a pure offering, so that there is never an hour when this world ceases to offer its incense, not one moment, even in the darkest shades of midnight, when prayer does not ascend from this lower world.

And it would be ill for the world if there were a moment when prayer should be suspended, for remember what a poet says, "Perhaps the day when this world shall be consumed will be a day unbrightened by a prayer." Perhaps it may be so, but certainly such a day as that has not yet rolled over the world, for day without night the world is girdled with prayer, and one sacred belt of supplication winds the whole globe round.

Now, said Christ, if God's elect in heaven and on earth are day without night, without ceasing, crying to God to give the church her empire, her reign, her splendors, her victories, rest assured the church shall have what it asks for. Shall not God avenge His own elect that cry day and night unto Him?

Yes, beloved brethren, we may not live to see it, though sometimes I think there are some alive in this world who will live to see that bright day, and yet, if we live not to see it, the day shall come when Christ, who is the truth, shall have all power given unto Him under heaven, as He has even now really, He shall then have it given to Him in the form and symbol and fashion of it also.

The day is coming when Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign upon this earth in the midst of His people. Then, when He shall come, the kingdoms of this world shall be converted to Him, all people shall flock to His colors, every knee shall bow before Him, and every tongue confess that the Lord is God.

I have sometimes thought that I may yet live to see that day, and some of you perhaps. We cannot tell when Christ shall come. We are very apt to forget that He comes as a thief in the night, in such an hour as we think not. It is a pleasing thought sometimes to recollect that there may be some standing here that will not die, for we know the Scripture says, "Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trump."

When Christ shall come, we shall be alive and remain, perhaps, some of us, for He may come tomorrow, He may come tonight, before the word I am speaking reaches your ear, the trumpet of the resurrection and jubilee may startle us all, and we may behold Christ come in the clouds of heaven.

But whether He comes or not in our lifetime, there will be some alive when He shall come, and they, if they are His people, shall not die, they shall be changed, "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

O work on, minister; toil on, teacher; weep on, mourner; pray on, intercessor; hope on, believer; the hallowed day is coming! Some of the streaks of the grey light already mark the horizon, some of the sweet tidings of the Master's coming have already been announced to God's favorite people, some that have dwelt high on the mountaintop of communion have declared that the time is approaching near. The chariot wheels of Christ are drawing nigh. But be it near, or be it far off, it must come, it shall come, the church shall triumph, the world shall be subdued beneath her feet. God shall avenge His own elect, who cry day and night unto Him. Now, I take that as the absolute meaning of the passage, the nearest and most appropriate way of explaining it.

II. And now I am going to try to work out THE PRINCIPLE OF THE TEXT.

It is this—*Importunity will prevail*. Now you must not smile while I give you two pictures, the pictures that Christ gave His disciples, worked out a little, so as to be more plain to you. Jesus Christ says if you want anything of God, if you do not get it the first time, try again, and if you do not get it then, continue in prayer, for long continuing in prayer, you will prevail with God, and He gives you two pictures that we have had this evening.

The first is the good man who had no bread in his house when his friend came. You may picture the scene. He says, "I am very glad to see you, but I have not a morsel of food in the house. If I had the richest dainties in the world, you should have them all, but I have not any." "Well, but," says his friend, "I have come a good many miles this day, I cannot go to rest without something to eat. I shall faint." "Well, but," he says, "I have nothing for you."

"My dear friend," says the other, "cannot you obtain a morsel? I am famished by the way, I expected to have got to my resting place at noontide, and now it is midnight, I have been travelling these twelve hours, and have had nothing at all to eat." "Well," says his friend, "I have something for your horse to eat, but I cannot give you anything," but at length he says, "There is a friend of mine who lives down the street, I will go and get something from him. You shall not starve. I will not come away till I get something."

Away he goes, and finds his friend asleep, he gives a great knock, the man is upstairs in bed, and he says, "My wife and my children are with me in bed." He does not want to hear that knock, and so he just sleeps on. Then there comes another tremendous knock. Says the man, "I cannot think who that can be." The question is asked by those who are upstairs, but he does not feel at all inclined to get out and look. It is a cold night, and why should he get up?

Then there comes another rap. "Well," he says, "there is somebody at the door." He still turns in his bed, and will not get up. He doesn't see why he should rise at such an untimely hour as that. Besides, after all, it may be only some drunken fellow going home late.

Then there comes another tremendous knock. He goes to the window, puts his head out, and asks what is the matter. "Oh!" says the man, "I want some loaves of bread, a friend of mine has come to see me, and I have nothing for him." "What do you come to me for at such an hour as this? I cannot come down, my wife and my children are with me in bed, I cannot give you bread at this hour of the night." "But," says the other, "I must have it, and I hope you will give it to me. What a friend you have been to me in times past!" "Friend or no friend," he says, "I shall not give you anything at this time of night." "He will not rise and give to him because he is his friend."

Then what does the poor man do? He says, "I will not go back." He thinks he sees that poor hungry man, and he cannot bear the thought of going back and saying that he has nothing for him. That was the only house where he could get bread, and so he knocks again. "Oh, dear me!" says the man, "I thought I had got rid of that fellow. I told him I couldn't get up at this hour, and I won't!"

But then there comes another rap—a tremendous one, and a child says "Father, we can't go to sleep, hadn't you better go and give that man his bread?" but the father says, "No, I shall not, why does he trouble me in this way?" Then there comes another rap, and he goes to the window in great anger, and asks him, "Whatever do you want coming knocking here in this way? I tell you once for all I shall not give you anything!" "Well," says the man, "you must give me bread, I cannot go till you do, if you do not give me any, I mean to stop here and knock all night."

"Well," says Jesus, "I tell you, though he will not arise and give it to him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth." So he comes downstairs, gets the loaves, opens the door, and says to the man, "Here, take as many as you want, and be off with you, and never come to disturb me any more at nights." So off he goes, and importunity gets what even friendship could not obtain.

Well, then the Savior gives another picture. Importunity can get what even justice ought to get, but cannot. There is the poor widow, she is robbed of all she has, she had a little plot of ground, and a little cottage with just enough to keep her children through the winter, and there was a little field, or two, that she could let out for rent sufficient to keep her all the year, and now it is all pounced upon.

She does not know what she is to do. Somebody will come in to claim it who has no right to it. She is turned out of house and home, and she and her poor children are on the streets. She goes off to the judge's house to see him—a rather wild errand that, for when she gets there, there stand the porters at the door, and the men with halberds, and they say, "Woman, what do you want?"

"I want to see the judge." "You cannot see the judge, he has got plenty to do without seeing you." "But I must see him, here is a man that has been taking"—"I do not want to know anything at all about it, you cannot see him." "But I must see him," says the woman, and somehow or other, though the porters repulse her all day long, she manages to get into court, and just when some witness steps down, up comes the woman and begins, "My Lord." "What case is that, sergeant?" says the judge. "Oh, it has nothing to do with the court business today, my Lord!" "Get down with you," says the judge to the woman. "O my Lord," she replies, "there is a man that has come and taken away"—"Now, you have no right here, I tell you, you must go," and she goes down, sad at heart.

But the next morning she comes again. As soon as ever the court house is open, there is the woman at the door. Before anybody can be found to enter, there she is. She had established herself there as soon as the people came to get the place ready. Well, before they can begin the business of the day, the

woman begins crying out, “O my lord, my husband is dead”—“Did you not come here yesterday?” says the judge. “Yes, my Lord.” “Well, I thought I told you this was not the proper time and place to apply. I cannot attend to you.” “O my Lord, if you would but just hear my case a little”—“Bring the next case up,” says the judge, and there is a case brought up, and the judge proceeds.

There happens, however, to be an interlude in the business, such as the poor widow has been looking for a long time, and his honor is just going out of court for a little refreshment, and as he is leaving, the woman steps up and says, “My Lord”—“Now take that woman away, she is always coming here and disturbing me.” The poor woman is taken away, but she returns, and all day long the poor soul is there.

She comes the next day, and when the judge arrives, there is the apparition of this poor woman to startle him again. What is to be done all day long? He knows that at every possible opportunity she can get, she will be down upon him to ask him to avenge her of her adversary.

At length he says, “Well, what is your case?” And as soon as it is stated, he thinks to himself, “I know that man very well, that has taken away her property. He is a friend of mine. I shall not interfere in the case. I neither fear God, nor regard man, but as a friend of mine has got her property, I shall not interfere,” and then, addressing the woman, “I absolutely forbid you ever to come to this place again.”

But she comes again, and again, and again, until one day she steps into the witness box, and says, “My lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit”—“Now I do not want any more of that, you are always giving me your long sermons in court.” “My lord,” continues the woman, “I will have a hearing today. I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit, I have been here many times before, and you have sent me away, when I ought to have had justice at your hands, and now this day, unless I am dragged out of court by force, I will stop until I get justice.”

Well, the judge thinks to himself a moment or two and says, “If I were just to decide this woman’s case, I would get rid of her. Well, come, my good woman, let us hear about it.” So she tells the whole history of the case, the judge sends the officer of the court to inquire into it, and at last he says, “Though I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow troubles me, I will avenge her of her adversary.” He accordingly sets all her accounts square, and she goes home to her cottage with a joyous heart, and her children are fed, and all is happy, for the judge has set her free from all her dilemmas.

Now, friends, there you have a case of importunity even going before the claims of justice, as in the other case it went before the claims of friendship.

Now what are these two pictures to teach the sinner? They are to teach the sinner that if the importunate woman could prevail with an unjust judge, you will prevail with a loving Savior, to teach you, that if by constant knocking the friend who at first would not rise, at last did rise and give bread, by your repeated prayers you shall at last find the salvation that you need.

I am certain that somewhere within the compass of my voice, there is one who has been for weeks and months seeking the Savior, but he or she has never yet found the Savior, Satan has whispered perhaps, “God will never have mercy upon you, you may as well give up prayer, prayer is a useless employment if it has no answer, never attend the house of God again, there is no mercy for you, never again come to the throne of grace, for God’s ears are deaf to you, He will not hear your supplication.”

Now, poor heart, listen not to the temptation of the devil, but listen to this that I have to say unto you—go again seven times, and if that suffice not, seventy times seven, God has not promised to answer you the first time, He will answer you, however, at the end, so continue your prayers.

When, with deep anxiety of spirit I sought the Savior, many months I prayed before I could get an answer, and I heard my mother say one day, that there never was a man in the world, she believed, so wicked as to say that he had sought God truly and earnestly in prayer, and God had not answered him. “Many black oaths,” said she, “have been sworn, but I never heard of any man who was allowed to utter a sentence so derogatory to the love and mercy of God as that—‘I have sought God, and He would not save me.’”

At once the thought struck me, “I will say that, for I know I have sought God, and I feel He has not heard me.” I resolved that I would say it, and that she should hear me, for I felt my spirit vexed within

me. I had sought God, and I thought, with all my heart, and He had never vouchsafed to hear me. But then it occurred to me, "Would it not be better to try again before saying it?" That time I sought as I had not sought before, and that time I found and rejoiced in hope of the glory of God, because my supplication had been answered in my own heart, to my own soul's comfort.

Now, if you are in the same position, and are laboring under the same temptation, try again. If your knees have been bent seventy times in vain, remember you have seventy times the fewer to pray in vain, so try again, you are so much nearer the appointed number which you must reach before God will hear you, give not up your efforts. In fact, I know you neither will nor can give up, if God the Holy Spirit has taught you praying, for that is one of the things that Satan cannot do—he cannot effectually stop a praying tongue—he cannot forever quench the desire of the soul, though he may for a time do it by despondency and despair, yet he cannot do it in the end.

I want, before I have done, to take the hand of that young man, or that young woman, who is tonight seeking the Savior, but as yet, without having found Him to his heart's joy, and I want to say a kind word to him. Dear brother, God will hear you, be of good courage, but in the meantime to keep your spirits up I will tell you a few things.

Consider what a great being God is, and what a little creature you are, and then you need not wonder that you have to wait. Why, poor people, when they go to see a rich man, will stop in his hall for hours, and if they are going to see a great lord, they will not mind waiting in the antechamber where there is no fire, till their feet are cramped with cold, so long as they have a hope that they shall get an audience at last.

The pertinacity of the beggar in the streets is sometimes astonishing, you cannot get rid of him, you walk a little faster, and he walks a little faster too, he keeps talking to you about his wife who is sick, and tells you that he is a poor man, that you will never miss what you give him, that God will bless you, and all that.

Well, if a beggar will wait upon his fellow worm, if we would be content to wait upon the great of the earth for so long a season, oh! we need not murmur against God if He bids us wait in His halls, for we are poor miserable sinners who are good for nothing, and He is the eternal God. There is such a distance between Him and us, that we need not murmur if He keeps us waiting.

Besides, let us recollect what a great blessing it is we are asking for. The beggar will stop at your door half an hour with the hope of getting perhaps a crust of bread, and men will go and wait in the halls of princes just to get a word. But ah! my friends, that which we are seeking is more than that, we are seeking for the salvation of our souls, we are seeking for the blood of Christ, for the pardon of sin, for a seat in paradise, for deliverance from the flames of hell, and for such a gift as this it were worthwhile waiting a thousand years if we might be sure of getting it at last.

But again, poor soul, be willing to wait, because let me tell you this, you are sure to get what you seek. "Oh!" cries one, "I would not mind what I did if I thought I could be saved at last." Well, you will. There was never a soul that perished praying, never one who sought the Savior who was at last cast away. Oh, if the Lord should keep you waiting till your head is silvered o'er with grey, His mercy would not come too late, He would be sure at last to give an ear to your supplication, and bestow upon you the blessing. Therefore be patient, though the promise tarry, wait for it, for it will be sure to come.

But while you are waiting, do not do as some people have done. I had a hearer once who used to tell me that he was waiting, and I could never get him out of that idea say what I would, until at last I had to use a good illustration in order to prove to him that he was not waiting.

"Now," said I, "suppose I came to your house one day to tea, and you said to me, 'My dear sir, how late you are! we have been waiting for you.' And suppose there was no fire in the grate, no kettle singing on the hob, and no tea made, I should say, 'I do not believe you.'" Waiting implies being ready, if a man is waiting for another, he is ready for him. If you are waiting for the coach, why, you have your hat on and great coat and your gloves, and your bag is packed up, and you are ready to start, if you are waiting for the train, you are standing on the platform, and looking out for its arrival.

And when a man is waiting for Christ, he is ready for Christ. But when they say they are waiting, and they fold their arms in unconcern, it is a gross falsehood, they are waiting for God to destroy them, and nothing else.

When men do really wait for the Lord, this is the way they wait—they go where they hope to meet Him. If they hear that Jesus is in the house of God, they go there; if they hear that He is to be found in the reading of the Word, they read it day and night; if they hear that some minister has been specially blessed in the salvation of souls, they will go many miles to hear him, in order that they may see Jesus; they will go where Jesus goes, and when they get near Jesus, they will cry after Him. They will do as the blind man did when he heard that Jesus of Nazareth passed by.

Let us describe that scene, for a moment. A poor man sat by the wayside one day, he could see nothing, but he heard a great noise and a lot of people coming his way, so he said to some of the crowd, “What is that?” and they replied, “It is Jesus of Nazareth that passes by.” That he thinks is a fine opportunity, and he cries out as loud as ever he can, “Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me.”

Jesus Christ is preaching to the crowd as He walks along, working miracles, and He takes no notice of the cry. Then there is another shout, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” The disciples come and tell him to be still, that he is disturbing Christ in His preaching, and that he must not make so much noise—but so much the more, a great deal, he cries, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!” And that shout prevailed over the voice of Christ, and the tramping of the feet of the multitude, then Christ stood still, and looked at the blind man, opened his eyes, and gave him sight.

Now you must do the same, you must cry to Christ, you must agonize in prayer, and wrestle on your knees before Him when you think that you are near to Him. Above all, study His promises, and read His Word.

And if this sufficeth not, hear then the last advice and the best, go to your chamber tonight, you that have sought the Savior long, and as you think, sought Him in vain—go to your upper chamber, shut to thy doors, fall on your knees, open His Holy Word, turn to that passage which describes the death of Jesus, and when you have meekly and reverently read through the story of the crucifixion, shut up the Book, sit down and picture to your mind’s eye the hill of Calvary—see the cross in the midst of those two other crosses of the thieves. Picture to yourselves the Lord Jesus with the thorn crown on His head, with His hands all dropping blood, with His side distilling a purple torrent. Don’t think of anything else.

The first thing that will happen, God the Holy Spirit helping you, will be that you will begin to weep, tears will run down your cheeks at the sight of the dear bleeding Man, and after a while, faith will begin to kindle, and the thought will arise, “Many souls have been saved by trusting in Him that died upon the cross, and why not I?” And it may be that you shall come down from that chamber of yours with a light heart and gladsome countenance, singing as you come down the stairs—

*“Oh, how sweet to view the flowing
Of His sin-atonement blood!
With divine assurance knowing
He hath made my peace with God!”*

There is no other way of getting peace like that. O you that have sought often, adopt this last resource! You can but perish coming to Jesus, you will perish if you do not come, but at His feet ne’er a sinner died, and never sinner shall. “Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” You sin-bitten, conscience-stricken sons of men, hear the Gospel, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” This is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, that Christ died for sinners. Believe the Gospel, and your souls shall live, you shall be saved, and rejoice in glory everlasting.

Christ died for real sinners. You ask a man, “Do you take God’s name in vain?” “No.” “Do you honor other gods before the Lord JEHOVAH?” “No.” “Do you ever break the Sabbath?” “No.” “Do you

always honor your father and mother?” “Yes, all these things have I kept from my youth up.” Well then, Jesus Christ did not die for you at all, you are too good by half to go to heaven, you are not the sort of person the Gospel is preached to. Jesus Christ says, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” He came to save him whose aching heart and bleeding spirit and tearful eye betray the man who feels himself a sinner.

Now, may I write the word SINNER in great capital letters and ask, “Who is the man that this word depicts?” Suppose I were to do it, are there not some of you who would get up and say from your hearts, “O sir, that is my name, you may put that on me, I the chief of sinners am”? Well then, Jesus died for you.

“But,” says one, “if I had a few good works, I should think He did die for me.” Then you would have no reason to think so. Your reason for believing that Christ died for you must be grounded on your sins. “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”—that must be your only groundwork. “It is hard,” says one, “to draw white from black.” Ay, but though it is hard, that is what faith must do. You must infer the good from the seeming evil.

You know Martin Luther’s logic. He says, in his book on Galatians, that Satan once came to him and said, “Martin, you are a great sinner, you will be damned.” “No,” said he, “Satan, the first is true—I am a great sinner, the second is not true—for, because I am a great sinner (and I thank thee for telling me of it), and because I feel it, I shall be saved, for Christ came to save sinners, and so I cut your head off with your own sword.” The greatest saints on earth often have come to this. “Oh!” saith the heir of heaven, “I am afraid I am no child of God,” and the shortcut to comfort is this, “Well, if I am not a child of God, I am a sinner, and—

*“A sinner is a sacred thing,
The Holy Ghost has made him so.”*

And straightway he comes to Christ, and cries—

*“Nothing in my hands I bring,
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”*

Poor sinners, that is believing on Christ, believing that He died for you when there is no evidence that He did except your own sense of sin. Then, casting your black soul into the fountain, bringing your naked soul to the heavenly wardrobe, then do you prove the power of faith, and then are you thus manifested to be the children of God in verity and truth.

May the Lord add His blessing! If there are any careless souls here, may He awaken them, for Jesus Christ’s sake! Amen.

Taken from The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit C. H. Spurgeon Collection. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.